UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

*Official Records*

THIRD COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 14 November 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/50/SR.26
1 December 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

95-82254 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/C.3/50/L.13/Rev.1 containing the changes to the organization of the Committee's work agreed upon at its 25th meeting. In particular, the Secretary-General's report on the proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/50/747-E/1995/126) would be considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/160, before being submitted to the Committee. Accordingly, while the general discussion of agenda item 107 would conclude on Friday, 17 November, it was proposed that the item should remain open to enable the Committee to take action on the report before the suspension of the session in December.

2. Mrs. ÁLVAREZ (Dominican Republic) pointed out that the document in question was a note by the Secretariat. There had been a failure to comply with resolution 49/160, which clearly requested a report from the Secretary-General on the proposed merger.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would take note of that observation and pursue the matter further.

4. He took it that the Committee agreed to the changes in the organization of work.

5. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/50/3, 38, 110, 163, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/257/Rev.1-E/1995/61/Rev.1, A/50/346, 369, 373, 398, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/538, 691 and A/50/747-E/1995/126)

AGENDA ITEM 165: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/50/744; A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1)

6. Mrs. MONGELLA (Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women), introducing the two items, said that the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in October 1995, had reaffirmed the connection between the advancement of women and progress in society as a whole; women's issues were not only women's concerns, but societal issues too. A broad range of actors, contributing a diversity of experiences and knowledge, had participated in the Conference, thereby ensuring its inclusiveness. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1) was a global document representing women's hopes, expectations and aspirations for the twenty-first century. It defined strategies to empower women in the social, political and economic spheres and eliminate discrimination against them. Action and accountability had been the key words in Beijing.

7. Accordingly, the commitments made in the Platform must now be translated into action. The momentum created at the Conference must be sustained. Any delay in implementing the Platform would mean an increase in the number of women dying in childbirth, a rise in women's illiteracy and the perpetuation of violence and discrimination against women. Lack of resources should not be a pretext for failing to address women's issues and, given that decision-making remained heavily dominated by men, who sometimes found it difficult to appreciate women's concerns, women themselves must become crusaders. It was her strong conviction that, since the 189 Governments present in Beijing had adopted the Platform by consensus, they would rally both the resources and the political will necessary for its implementation.

8. In the follow-up to the Conference, Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society were called upon to work at different levels and in different capacities. The United Nations was, for its part, a crucial player in the implementation process. Since its inception, the Organization had facilitated the globalization of the women's agenda, breaking the silence on many women's issues previously considered taboo in public discussions. Without the Organization, it would not have been possible to adopt such instruments as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the next 50 years, it must work to honour the decisions made at the Conference. The bodies dealing with women's issues, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, must be strengthened to enable them to monitor more effectively the inclusion of a gender perspective in all the Organization's activities. Through its specialized agencies, the United Nations must widen its outreach to women at the grass-roots level, building on the spirit of cooperation which had characterized the preparatory process.

9. It must not be assumed that structures and attitudes would change automatically as a result of the Conference. Those changes must be part and parcel of the implementation of the Platform. The women working in the United Nations were no different from the other women of the world. They sometimes experienced sexual harassment, discrimination and unequal treatment. Currently, women were primarily workers, while men were the decision-makers. Bold steps were needed to create a new and better United Nations, an Organization which would serve as a model to Governments and the world, where men and women would work together as equal partners.

10. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744), said that, in the introduction, the Secretary-General had emphasized the inclusive and wide-ranging nature of the preparatory phase which had resulted in the adoption at the Conference of a Declaration and Platform for Action, encompassing a remarkable array of issues and enjoying strong and varied support. Beijing had been a Conference of commitments and the broad support for the Platform would enable those commitments to find their expression in concrete policies and measures. Immediate action was needed if real progress was to be made by the end of the century, particularly in the 12 critical areas (ibid., para. 16).

11. While Governments bore the primary responsibility for fulfilling the commitments made at Beijing, the Platform contained recommendations addressed to

the organizations of the United Nations system, which had a key role to play in providing operational support for country-level follow-up. In his report, the Secretary-General called for a new unity of purpose and action in the system as a whole. Important steps had already been taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to ensure a well-coordinated follow-up to the Beijing Conference and the other recent international conferences. The Secretary-General intended to propose to ACC the establishment of an inter-agency task force on the empowerment and advancement of women. At the intergovernmental level, the various policy-making bodies must harmonize their work in order to develop an enhanced framework for international cooperation on gender issues.

12. In response to the recommendations addressed specifically to him, the Secretary-General had outlined in his report (ibid., para. 56) arrangements for the proposed appointment in his Office of an adviser on gender issues. He would ensure that the gender dimension was fully reflected in the next medium-term plan and would continue his efforts to enhance the status of women in the Organization in accordance with the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000). The proposed establishment of a high-level board on the advancement of women would contribute significantly to strengthening the partnerships between the United Nations and civil society. Finally, the Secretary-General underlined in his report the importance of continued participation by non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Platform.

13. Mrs. EDWARDS (Marshall Islands) said that while the new millennium held the promise of significant progress for women, new and additional resources must be committed by the international community if the objectives of the Platform for Action were to be achieved. The Government of the Marshall Islands, for its part, was pursuing a national women's policy born out of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies adopted 10 years earlier. Since then, workshops had been held with the participation of local women and a number of critical areas of concern, including education, health and support of women's business initiatives, had been incorporated into the policy. Central objectives were to strengthen the Women's Affairs Division in the Ministry of Social Services; establish a contact point in each ministry to deal with the implementation of the national women's policy; conduct gender-sensitivity training at all levels of government; produce gender-specific data through the Office of Planning and Statistics; include young women in policy-making; and continue population education to combat the high population growth rate.

14. Economic growth - a prerequisite for sustained improvements in human development - must be accompanied by equitable distribution. Gender issues must be incorporated in economic development programmes with a view to increasing women's participation. Educational inequalities must be overcome in order to empower women to gain access to productive assets and control the gains from their labour in the interests of family, community and national development.

15. The major obstacles to women's progress in her country were high fertility rates and high child and infant mortality rates. In addition, the Marshall Islands was still struggling to overcome the effects of the nuclear-weapons testing programme conducted there, which the United Nations itself had condoned. The radiation that the population had been exposed to and the lingering

radiation in the environment and food crops had caused numerous health and environmental problems, which her country was unable to solve.

16. Since radiation caused extensive damage to the reproductive system, women throughout the nation were plagued with birthing problems and associated illnesses. Her Government was trying to mobilize its forces to deal with a new and startling fact: the leading cause of death for women in the Marshall Islands was cancer of the reproductive system. Although the level of health care available to pregnant women was inadequate, there was without doubt a link between that new cancer statistic and the radiation to which they had been exposed. Women in the Marshall Islands were experiencing a harrowing incidence of birth abnormalities, stillbirths and miscarriages. That was an example of the destructive cycle caused by nuclear radiation, which also impeded development. Nevertheless, her country could improve women's health and overall status through education and programmes in which women were able to contribute to sustainable human development.

17. Mrs. ÁLVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that the Committee must take a decision on the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM before it completed its consideration of agenda item 107. Her delegation had already distributed to the members of the Committee the text of its views together with copies of the statement made by the Dominican Republic in the Economic and Social Council in November 1994. All that background information was pertinent to the decision to be taken by the Committee on the matter.

18. Her Government was convinced that the administrative and financial operations of the United Nations needed a general review and restructuring. Nevertheless, the proposed institutional reform of all United Nations bodies dealing with the advancement of women should be an integral part of the general reform of the United Nations system since each had a mandate to deal with the issues of economic, social and cultural development and peace-building. The participants in a forum on the future of the United Nations held by ACC in March 1995 had discussed the reform of the United Nations and made recommendations. They had pointed out that fundamental issues had to be tackled, involving major reforms, and that an undertaking of that scope must be carried out in a democratic and transparent manner, with the involvement of all nations. They had emphasized the risk that wholly inappropriate, if not dangerous, approaches to reform would be adopted and given institutional expression.

19. The Organization's problems were primarily political and substantive and could not be resolved by reforms largely confined to a management approach and the mechanical transplantation of model techniques and institutional approaches corresponding to transnational enterprises or national Governments. The forum had stressed that the United Nations was unique and that, while improved management and cost-effectiveness were certainly needed, the reform must also deal with broader issues related to the roles and purposes of the Organization, whose overall performance could not be assessed on the basis of cost-benefit analysis. It had also emphasized that the fundamental principles set forth in the Charter must serve as a basic reference point for the reforms needed to be asserted as a bulwark against the frequent temptation on the part of a few major Powers to "steward" the world politically and economically.

20. Her delegation was deeply troubled by the way in which the Secretariat had chosen to deal with the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The lack of transparency and complete disregard of mandates given by Member States in various resolutions were cause for grave concern to a number of developing countries. The Secretariat was an international body and as such must serve the Organization. It must therefore be under the collective guidance and control of Governments and be protected against unilateral pressures by Governments to dominate and even manage the secretariats of international organizations.

21. She drew attention to an article entitled "The United Nations Has Been a Success", which had appeared in the 23 October 1995 issue of the magazine Time and was based on an interview with the Secretary-General. Without analysing the reasons underlying the desire expressed by the Secretary-General to move INSTRAW to New York or inquiring as to the source of the misleading information given to him about the Institute, her delegation wished to point out that decisions affecting the functional structure of United Nations bodies must not be taken without accurate information. Unfortunately, that was the way in which all items relating to the advancement of women continued to be dealt with in the United Nations. That was unacceptable under the Charter, according to which the Secretary-General was accountable to the Member States for the proper administration of the Organization and the implementation of its programmes. His managerial discretion was limited by the mandates given to him by Member States and the resources which they made available to fulfil those mandates. Unfortunately, the article proved unequivocally that, for a variety of reasons, the question of the advancement of women was not being correctly addressed. Women could not permit that.

22. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that it was truly disappointing that the Secretariat had never come close to reflecting in its composition a fundamental principle laid down in the Charter - the equal rights of women and men. Regrettably, the target set in 1990 for improving the representation of women in the Secretariat by 1995 would not be met. While the 35 per cent overall target had almost been achieved, the Organization was nowhere near the target of 25 per cent of senior posts to be filled by women. Women continued to be heavily clustered in subordinate positions, almost disappearing as grade levels rose.

23. Equitable representation of women in the Secretariat must be approached in an overall context of human resources planning and management. In view of the failure to meet the 1990 targets, both the Secretariat and Member States must redouble their efforts to ensure that other important targets for the advancement of women were achieved. The full and urgent implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) was essential to achieve the overall gender-equality target set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly at the Professional level and above.

24. She welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to integrate the strategic plan into the new management culture being developed for the Organization. The gender imbalance in the Secretariat must be addressed as part of a wider strategy for human resources management. Ensuring conditions for equality would require concerted and urgent efforts, including the development of policies to

eliminate all barriers faced by women, laying down appropriate policies for career development of women, and the creation of equitable work practices and an equitable work environment.

25. The best results would be achieved when the responsibility for the advancement of women in the Secretariat was placed directly on identifiable organizational units and officials. Her delegation welcomed the inclusion in training programmes of components designed to sensitize managers with regard to gender issues and the need to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of work. She noted the initiative for developing and implementing systems of planned rotation by occupational group and encouraged the Secretariat's continued investigation of flexible working arrangements which took account of family responsibilities. Australia, Canada and New Zealand welcomed the work of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and the discussions that had recently taken place in ACC, especially the statement it had adopted affirming the commitment of Executive Heads to ensure that the advancement of women was a policy priority within the organizations of the common system. The issue of women in the Secretariat should remain an item for the consideration of ACC.

26. Her delegation also welcomed the various initiatives undertaken by the Secretariat in the past year, but stressed that the task remained an enormous one and that initiatives should be undertaken urgently. While commending the measures taken to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace, she urged that any review of policies and procedures in that area should also include an examination of grievance redress systems.

27. The introduction of an equal-employment-opportunity policy would complement the Secretariat's current efforts to establish a clear policy direction on personnel practices. Lastly, she stressed that Member States also had a responsibility to help the United Nations succeed in that task and should nominate suitably qualified women for positions in the Organization, particularly at the professional and senior levels.

28. Ms. MESDOUA (Algeria) said that, as the Organization was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, approximately 70 per cent of those living in absolute poverty in the world were women. Many of them continued to struggle against hunger and malnutrition. Illiteracy rates among women were still higher than those of men; and many women had no access to the most basic health care. Women's struggle for equality was inseparably linked to that of men and no balanced society could be built without the full participation of women.

29. Algerian women had been involved in all the important stages of the country's history. The measures taken by her Government were designed to establish the place of Algerian women in society and improve their status. Such measures included providing universal free and compulsory education, maintaining a health care system to protect women and children, and ensuring access to employment with equal pay and without discrimination and were linked to the modernization taking place throughout Algerian society. Algerian women were aware of what was at stake in the struggle being waged in their country: the construction of a democratic and pluralistic State promoting the status of women and their real involvement in development. Accordingly, Algeria had done its

utmost to ensure the success of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was a landmark in efforts to ensure a better future for all women and society in general.

30. Mrs. SUBIRATS (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the delegations of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action constituted both a milestone on the road to equality and a political commitment to achieving the goals of equality, development and peace by the year 2000. Equality in decision-making was essential for strengthening democracy and a commitment had been made to making the gender perspective a benchmark for all policies.

31. The implementation of the Platform for Action was first and foremost the responsibility of Governments, which must take steps to bring about equality between the sexes and introduce the gender perspective into all social, economic, political and cultural fields. Their first action should be to develop comprehensive strategies in an appropriate time-frame and encourage non-governmental organizations to contribute to them. Governments should also ensure that national machinery was created or made more efficient in order to include a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas, while non-governmental organizations had an important role to play by organizing support networks.

32. Within the European Union, it had been decided that the implementation of the Platform for Action would be monitored annually by the Council of Ministers. The European Commission had prepared a new plan of action on equality of opportunities for men and women; the European Parliament had adopted specific resolutions as a result of the Beijing Conference, and a seminar was being organized in Madrid in late November in the context of regular discussions on equality issues in the European Union.

33. The implementation of the Platform for Action required a political commitment to guaranteeing the resources for the empowerment of women, nationally and internationally, and required the inclusion of the gender perspective in policy and programme budgets. The mobilization of resources from new private sources might also be necessary, together with support from development institutions and bilateral donors.

34. The follow-up to the Beijing Conference should be coordinated with the results of the major international conferences on economic, social and other matters. The challenge was how to ensure that the Platform for Action would be taken into account in current United Nations activities such as the agenda for development. There was a need to review the strategies and working methods of the United Nations machinery for the advancement of women; the planned creation of the post of an adviser to the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of gender policies throughout the system should contribute to that end.

35. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, together with the Commission on the Status of Women, would constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism which would play the main role in the implementation of the Platform for Action within the United Nations system. The Commission on the Status of Women should draw up a programme of work for the period 1996-2000

in order to review priority areas of concern contained in the Platform and assist the Economic and Social Council in identifying cases in which efforts to achieve integration had been unsuccessful. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women could also contribute to the follow-up process through the reports of States parties.

36. One of the main functions of the Division for the Advancement of Women was to provide substantive service to the Commission on the Status of Women. As a consequence of the Beijing Conference, the resources allocated to the Division needed to be reviewed within the regular budget of the United Nations in order to enable it to carry out the tasks set out in the Platform for Action.

37. The European Union attached great importance to the role of the specialized agencies and other organizations within the United Nations system in supporting action and strategies for the implementation of the Platform for Action. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had, since their inception, developed important research and training activities in connection with the situation of women, and could play an important role in supporting the implementation of the Platform for Action. The international financial institutions also had a role to play and should review their policies, procedures and staffing to ensure that the gender perspective was fully integrated, so that investments and programmes would benefit women and contribute to sustainable development.

38. Referring to agenda item 107, she said that the European Union was convinced of the need for States to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and therefore called for the full implementation of those provisions of the Platform for Action which concerned the Convention. It also supported the process initiated by the Commission on the Status of Women for the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the right of petition.

39. The issue of violence against women should continue to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was an important instrument and the European Union welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women and supported her work.

40. Mr. WISSA (Egypt) said that the Egyptian Government had begun to formulate the policies necessary for the implementation of the Beijing recommendations. Egyptian women had made important advances during the twentieth century and currently participated significantly in all aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life. There was general consensus in Egyptian society on the effectiveness of women's roles and the importance of their full participation in all spheres. Egypt had played an important part in the development of civilization, and would be able to adapt to modern society. A dynamic society could not be built without the contribution of women and Egyptian society was clearly supportive of the Egyptian women's movement and of women's effective social and economic participation.

41. Egypt would face a number of challenges in the twenty-first century, the first of them being that of education. There was a gap between the educational levels reached in Egypt and those of developed countries which, if allowed to continue, would have a serious effect on Egypt's ability to maintain cultural progress. It was proposed to tackle that problem on two levels: the qualitative, which would involve a change of curricula, bring Egyptian students' educational level into line with that of developed countries, and quantitative, involving the eradication of illiteracy, particularly among women. The women's movement attached great importance to the raising of women's educational standards and the eradication of illiteracy.

42. The second challenge was that presented by Egyptian culture, and women's strategy should be to strengthen and support the enlightened approach. The third challenge was economic: there was an enormous gap between Egypt and the economically developed countries. Women had an important role to play in meeting that challenge. Women's participation in development at all levels should be expanded and each woman should also become economically independent.

43. Strong democratic institutions and policies would affirm women's role in laying the foundations for democracy in the home through the early education of children. Women's full participation in society at every level would help to eliminate prejudice. Egypt proposed to prepare detailed studies on plans to meet the challenges faced by Egypt and Egyptian women.

44. The future looked promising for the women's movement in Egypt, since society in general was supportive, realizing the importance of women's contribution to development. International cooperation would be an important factor in the advancement of women and in achieving the principles agreed upon at the Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen conferences.

45. Ms. NAFISAH (Malaysia), speaking on agenda item 107, said that the "feminization of poverty" referred to in the Platform for Action was a reality requiring immediate attention, since women comprised 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people below the absolute poverty line. The poverty of women was the poverty of society at large and education was of major importance in addressing that issue; educating women was a necessary investment for the continued promotion of economic and social development, while educational opportunities for both men and women ensured that the potential of the individual could be developed. Educated and literate women tended to have better access to employment, income, health care and nutrition. In Malaysia, more women than men went on to post-secondary education, but efforts to extend vocational training opportunities for women needed to be made world wide.

46. Health was also an important indicator of women's position and status; laws were needed to protect working women whose work could endanger their health. In Malaysia, life expectancy for women had increased while maternal and infant mortality had also improved significantly.

47. Women were the most vulnerable in ethnic, religious and civil conflicts, when they faced the danger not only of being killed or injured but also of being raped, abused or forced into prostitution. Where, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

rape had been used as a weapon of war, the international community must ensure that the perpetrators of such acts were brought to justice.

48. In Malaysia, there was a special focus on the integration of women into development through the national policy for women adopted in 1989. A plan of action was aimed at involving women in decision-making, safeguarding their rights to health, education and social well-being, removing legal obstacles and ensuring tneir access to development, particularly in science and technology. Efforts continued with a view to increasing the participation of women in economic affairs so that they could share in the benefits of development. The Constitution of Malaysia had long guaranteed their political rights.

49. The economic, social and political empowerment of women would be less than effective without the cooperation of the mass media, which could highlight the plight of women and also their contribution to society.

50. Her Government did not favour the creation of new institutional machinery for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, but suggested that UNIFEM could concentrate on operational aspects while the Division for the Advancement of Women could focus on policy issues. It hoped that a consensus could be reached in that regard.

51. Mrs. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Beijing Conference had represented women's first opportunity to discuss in an international conference such matters as women's unpaid work, equal inheritance rights, reproductive rights recognized as human rights and violence against women being considered as a human rights violation. However, the Conference would not be a true success unless action was taken on all levels to implement its recommendations. In Côte d'Ivoire the preparatory committee for the Conference had been given the new mandate of overseeing implementation, and a national plan of action was currently being worked out. Women's organizations were being strengthened and were preparing for action.

52. However, apathy seemed to be affecting international organizations, and there already appeared to be some withdrawal from agreements. Budget restrictions had first affected departments concerned with the advancement of women. Immediately after the Beijing Conference, eight posts had been lost in one of the main bodies responsible for financing the integration of women in development, and another had decided to reduce by 25 per cent its budget for the advancement of women. Furthermore, the only two women with the rank of Under-Secretary-General in the United Nations Secretariat were about to complete their contracts and were not assured of other posts at the same level. An examination of the position of women in the Secretariat showed that men still occupied all the major posts, and that the promotion of women to high-level positions was still a pious wish. There could hardly be no suitably qualified women candidates for those posts.

53. While Governments had primary responsibility for implementing the Beijing recommendations, developing countries, particularly in Africa, could not honour their undertakings without the support of the international community. Stagnant economies and the dwindling of external resources hampered most African countries' development activities, including the advancement of women.

54. An analysis of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Programme for Action (A/CONF.177/20, annex II, para. 44) showed that the agencies had a major role to play, and needed substantial contributions in order to carry out their assignments. There had been an observable decline in the budgets of development programmes; official development aid had reached its lowest level since 1993. The structures in the Secretariat and the regional commissions responsible for implementing the Platform for Action needed additional resources, but as yet there had been no changes.

55. The commitment undertaken by the World Bank at Beijing to support programmes for the education and economic promotion of women in poor countries had been encouraging. Other regional and international financial institutions should follow that example and facilitate women's access to credit and economic structures, in order to reverse the trend of the feminization of poverty. At Beijing, solemn undertakings had been given to promote women in the economic, social and political spheres, but without genuine political will and the necessary funds, it was likely that the living conditions of millions of women in the world would stagnate or even regress.

56. Mr. ALBIN (Mexico), speaking on agenda item 107, said that although obstacles still existed to the advancement of women, improved conceptual and methodological tools for analysis, discussion and action had been evolved since the Mexico Conference of 1975. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided a framework for action at all levels and incorporated commitments by Governments and indications of how various sectors of society could supplement their efforts.

57. It was time to leave restrictive approaches behind and elaborate comprehensive polices which would give women access to opportunities and resources. The Platform for Action reflected the willingness of Governments to give a new direction to economic and social development policies and to reallocate resources. The support of the United Nations system and international cooperation were vital for implementing the commitments made in Beijing, although careful consideration needed to be given to the adjustments to be made to ensure that existing machinery could handle that task efficiently. The Commission on the Status of Women needed to be strengthened while the Economic and Social Council had a coordinating role to play. Of particular importance was the dissemination of information on the Beijing Conference so as to allow all concerned members of society to be involved in achieving its goals.

58. Mexico had always recognized the valuable contribution of women to production, to the preservation of the Mexican culture and to the progress of democracy. The commitment of the Mexican Government was reflected in its national development plan, which contained measures to guarantee women equality of opportunities, education, training and employment, to be implemented in a national women's programme which would serve as a framework for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

59. Mrs. FENG Cui (China) said that the enhancement of international cooperation was essential to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The international community should fulfil the commitments undertaken at the Conference and mobilize new and additional resources to

advance women. The Chinese Government had always advocated the equality of men and women, attached great importance to the advancement of women and committed itself to protecting women's rights and interests and eliminating discrimination. Recent advances had included a series of legal instruments relating to the protection of women's rights and interests. They included a law on the protection of women's rights; the appointment of women to a number of important positions; a rise in the number of women employed to 44 per cent of the total employed; equal pay for equal work; the emergence of thousands of women from poverty; and the high rate of literacy achieved amongst girls and women.

60. The Government had recently drafted its programme for the advancement of Chinese women to the year 2000, representing an important step in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The State Council committee on the work of women and children had called upon all local governments to formulate plans for the advancement of women and integrate those plans into their respective development programmes.

61. The Chinese Government had identified a number of priorities for improving the status of women. Women's potential must be developed and their access to employment increased; men and women should enjoy equal pay for equal work, equal labour protection and social security, and women should participate fully in economic construction. Women in undeveloped areas and the least advantaged groups needed special assistance and preferential treatment. Women's access to education must be improved, and girls' enrolment in school must be increased. Health institutions catering for women and children and their provision of reproductive health services must be improved. Laws and regulations on the protection of women's rights and interests must be constantly improved, and those who violated women's rights should be brought to justice. The number of women participating in political affairs and holding important public office should be increased. Lastly, bodies concerned with the advancement of women should be strengthened and monitoring mechanisms should be established.

62. The Chinese Government was taking action to fulfil its commitments, and was ready to work with the international community in order to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

63. Ms. SHAM POO (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Beijing Conference had been a conference of commitments. Some 65 Governments had announced that they had taken or would take specific action to enhance the status of women in their countries. United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, and international financial institutions had also made concrete commitments.

64. The logical place to start implementing the Beijing Platform for Action was early in the lives of girls. Referring to the first of three key areas for priority action, she said UNICEF believed that Governments should be assisted in reaching the goal of primary education for all girls by the year 2000. UNICEF itself would seek to double its budget for education within the same period.

65. With regard to the health of adolescent girls and women, its second key area, UNICEF would cooperate in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in that sector of the population and in renewed efforts to lower maternal mortality.

66. Children's and women's rights were the third key area for action by UNICEF. It would continue its cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and increase its support to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In the field it would support efforts to link advocacy for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with national programmes of action for children and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

67. UNICEF was working towards greater gender-responsiveness; it was beginning to use the life-cycle approach and the gender-equality and empowerment framework in planning its programmes; it was training its staff and counterparts in gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming; it was reviewing its organizational structure and allocation of resources to support the implementation of the Platform for Action; it was striving to create a work environment free from gender discrimination and developing a monitoring system to measure progress for women from the community level upwards. It had come to understand that achieving gender equality was central to improving the lives of children and their families, to building sustainable development and to creating a civilized world in the twenty-first century.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.